

A TRVE
RELATION
OF THOSE SAD
AND LAMENTABLE

Accidents, which happened in
and about the Parish Church of

Withycombe in the Dartmoores,

in *Devonshire*, on Sunday
the 21. of *October* last,
1638.

PSAL. 46. 8.

*Come, behold the workes of the Lord, what desolations
hee hath made in the earth.*



LONDON,

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shop in *Queenes-head-alley* in *Pater-noster-row* at the
guilt Bible, 1638.

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A TRUE
RELATION OF

those most strange and lamentable Accidents, happening

in the Parish Church of Wi-

thycombe in Devonshire on

Sunday the 21. of October.

1638.

Christian Readers,



GOODS visible Iudgements, and terrible remonstrances (which every morning are brought to light) coming unto our knowledge, should be our observation and

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Eph. 3. 5.

Isa. 26. 9, 11.

*Pena paucorum
terror omnium*

admonition, *that thereby the inhabitants of the earth may learne Righteousnesse*, for to let them passe by us (as water runnes by our doores) unobserved; argues too much regardlesnesse of GOD in the way of his Iudgements: not to suffer them to sinke into our affections, and to proove as so many terrible warning pieces, which are shot off from a watch Tower, to give notice of an enemies approach, to awaken and affright us; are but a meanes to harden our hearts against the Lord, and to awaken his Iustice to punish us yet more: But *to heare and feare* and to doe wickedly no more; to search our hearts and amend our waies is the best use that can bee made of any of GODS remarkable terrors manifested among us. When GOD is angry with us, it ought to be our wisdom to meete him, and make peace with him: And where wee see legible Characters of his power and wrath; to
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learne to spell out his meaning touching our selves; to leave off all busie, malicious, causlesse, and unchristianly censuring of others, and to turne in upon our selves, remembring, *Vel pœnitendum, vel pereundum*, Except wee repent, wee shall likewise perish. Certaine it is that wee doe in vaine expect immunity from GODS Iudgements by sleighting, or contemning them, and increasing in our sinnings against him. If Pharoah by the terrour of thundring and lightning was so affrighted that hee saith to Moses, *Intreat the Lord* (for *Exo 9.28.* it is enough) that there bee no more mighty thundrings and Haile. And if Caligula, out of the feare of thunder, would runne under his bed to hide himselfe: How much more should we Christians learne to feare and tremble before the most mighty GOD, whose voice shakes the mountaines and rends the rocks, and divides the flames of fire; rends Churches, amazeth, and strikes *Psal. 29.*

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strikes dead at his pleasure the sonnes of men? as the Prophet David saith, *Hee doth whatsoever hee pleaseth in Heaven and Earth, Hee causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth, and maketh lightnings for the raine, and bringeth the winde out of the treasures of the earth, so unsearchable is his Wisedome, and his waies past finding out.* I say, this should awe and humble our hearts before the LORD, rising up unto more perfection in godlinesse, doing unto our GOD, more and better service then ever hitherto wee have done, reverencing and sanctifying his dreadful Name in our hearts: especially when his Iudgements breake in upon men, even in his owne house, mingling their bloud with their sacrifices, and that in a most terrible manner smiting, and wounding, and killing, as in this ensuing Relation may appeare: which for the suddennesse and strangenesse thereof, and in a manner miraculous, considering

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sidering the circumstances thereof, I beleeve few Ages can paralell, or produce the like. The Lord teach thee to profit thereby, that it may bee as a Sermon preached to thee from Heaven by the Lord himselfe.



Pon Sunday the 21. of *October* last, In the Parish Church of *Wichycombe* in *Devonshire* neare *Dartmoores*, there fell in time of Divine Service a strange darkenesse, increasing more and more, so that the people there assembled could not see to reade in any booke, and suddenly in a fearefull and lamentable manner, a mighty thundering was heard, the ratling whereof did answer much like unto the sound and report of many great Cannons, and terrible strange lightening therewith,
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greatly amazing and astonishing those that heard and saw it, the darknesse increasng yet more, till they could not (in the interim) see one another; the extraordinarie lightning came into the Church so flaming, that the whole Church was presently filled with fire and smoke, the smell whereof was very loathsome, much like unto the sent of brimstone, some said they saw at first a great ball of fire come in at the window and passe thorough the Church, which so much affrighted the whole Congregation that the most part of them fell downe into their seates, and some upon their knees, some on their faces, and some one upon another, with a great cry of burning and scalding, they all giving up themselves for dead.

The Minister of the Parish, Master George Lyde, being in the Pulpit or seate where prayers are read, however hee might bee much astonished hereat

hereat, yet through G O D S mercy had no other hurt at all in his body; but to his much grieve and amazement heard, and afterward beheld the lamentable accident; and although himselfe was not touched, yet the lightening seized upon his poore Wife, fired her ruffe and linnen next to her body, and her cloathes; to the burning of many parts of her body in a very pitifull manner. And one Mistresse *Ditford* sitting in the pew with the Ministers wife, was also much scalded, but the maid and childe sitting at the pew dore had no harme. Beside, another woman adventuring to run out of the Church, had her cloathes set on fire, and was not only strangely burnt and scorched, but had her flesh torne about her back almost to the very bones. And another woeman had her flesh so torne and her body so grievously burnt, that she died the same night.

Also one Master *Hill* a Gentleman of good account in the Parish, sitting in his

seate by the Chancell, had his head suddenly smitten against the wall, through the violence whereof he died that night, no other hurt being found about his body; but his sonne sitting in the same seate had no harme. There was also one man more, at the same instant, of whom it is particularly related, who was Warriner unto Sir *Richard Reynolds*, his head was cloven, his skull rent into three peeces, and his braines throwne upon the ground whole, and the haire of his head, through the violence of the blow at first given him, did sticke fast unto the pillar or wall of the Church; so that hee perished there most lamentably.

Some other persons were then blasted and burnt, and so grievously scalded and wounded, that since that time they have died therof; and many other not like to recover, notwithstanding all the meanes that can bee procured to helpe them. Some had their cloaths burnt and their

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bodies had no hurt, and some on the contrary, had their bodies burnt, and their cloathes not touched. But it pleased God yet in the midst of judgement to remember mercy, sparing some and not destroying all.

Also there were some Seats in the Body of the Church turned upside downe, and yet they which sate in them had little or no hurt. And one man going out at the Chancell doore, his Dogg running out before him, was whirled about towards the doore and fell downe starke dead: at the sight whereof his Master stepped backe within the doore, and God preserved him alive. Moreover the Church it selfe was much torne and defaced by the thunder and lightning; and thereby also a beame was burst in midst, and fell downe betweene the Minister and Clarke and hurt neither; and a weighty great stone, neare the Foundation of the Church is torne out and remooved, and the steeple

ple it selfe is much rent, and there where the Church was most rent there was least hurt done, and not any one was hurt either with the wood or stone, but only a maid of *Manaton*, which came thither that afternoone to see some friends, Master *Frind* the *Coroner* by circumstances, supposed she was killed by a stone. There were also stones throwne from the Tower as thick as if an hundred men had beene there throwing. Also a Pinnacle of the Tower torne downe and beate through into the Church.

Also the Pillar against which the Pulpit standeth, being but newly whited, is now by this meanes turned blacke and sulphry: Furthermore, one man that stood in the Chancell, with his face toward the Bellfrey, observed the rising as it were of dust or lime, in the lower end of the Church, which suddenly (as with a puffle of winde) was whirled up and cast into his eyes, so that hee could not see in twelve houres after; but now his
 sight

fight is restored, and hee hath no other hurt. The terrible lightening being past, and all the people being in a wonderfull maze, so that they spake not one word, by and by on Master *Raph Rouse*, Vintner in the Towne, stood up, saying, Neighbours, in the name of GOD shall we venture out of the Church, to which Master *Lyde* answering, said, it is best to make an end of prayers, for it is better to die here then in another place, but they looking about them, and seeing the Church so terribly rent and torne over their heads, durst not proceed in their publike devotions, but went forth of the Church.

And as all this was done within the Church, and unto the Church; so there were other strange accidents without the Church; of which I will give you a touch. There was a Bowling-alley neare unto the Church-yard, which was turned up into pits and heapes, in manner almost as if it had beene plowed.

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At the same time also at *Brixston* neare *Plymouth*, there fell such store of Haile, and such Haile-stones, that for quantity they were judged to be as big as ordinary Turkies eggs; some of them were of five, some of six, and others of seven ounces weight.

We are also certainly informed that at the same time, as neare as it can bee guessed, there fell out the like accident unto the Church at *Norton* in *Somersetshire*, but as yet wee heare of no persons hurt therein: Also it is related by a Gentleman that travelled in those parts at that time, hee being since come to *London*, that where hee was the lightning was so terrible, fiery and flaming, that they thought their houses at every flash were set on fire, in somuch that their horses in the stable were so affrighted that they could not rule them.

All which most sad and lamentable Spectacles were done (as it were) in a moment of time

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This is the Summe of that dismall accident and terrible example happening in the place aforesaid, as it hath been carefully extracted out of the letters of Ministers and other men of quality and good account and credit living not onely in the Parish of *Withiccombe*, but in the adjoyning Parishes and places, and by those that had the full relation from Master *Lyde* his own mouth. And the maine drift in the publication of this great Iudgement, is for thy humiliation and edification, not onely to acquaint thee with the great and mighty works of GODS Power and Iustice, who in a moment can do mighty things, and arme the creatures against us at his owne pleasure, but also to moove pittie and compassion in us towards our Brethren who were patients therein. Which relation you can difficultly reade without sighs, nor understand without teares. I know it is the fashion of too too many to question and talke, and make things
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of this nature, but a *nine dayes wonder* :
 But let us not deceive our selves any
 longer, not judging them greater sin-
 ners then our selves, but consider, we
 have beene lookers on a great while,
 and others have beene made our exam-
 ples, and felt the smart at home and
 abroad, whilst wee have gone free;
 but wee know not how soone our
 turnes and changes may come; this
 accident might as well have happened
 to us as them; the LORD therefore in much
 mercy fit us both for the worst of times
 and the best of Ends. I end all with
 that prayer in our Letany, commending
 thee and this to the blessing of the Al-
 mighty.

*From lightning and tempest, from Plague
 Pestilence and Famine, from Bat-
 tle and murder, and from
 suddaine death.*

Good LORD deliver us.

FINIS.



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